

FEARLESS



FEARLESS # 66

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“Genuine poetry can communicate
before it is understood”

- T.S. ELIOT

F E A R L E S S: a brief history...

fearless began in the early 90's as a print 'zine featuring poets from around the world. the aim of the project was and continues to be, the celebration of accomplished as well as unheralded writers outside of any literary and/or academic scene.

fearless changed formats in this new millennium from paper to PDF file. many of the old fearless family have returned for this re-boot issue and new voices who are making waves in writing are also on board. we thank all of the contributors and hope everyone enjoys this new issue.

A n o t e on the front cover:

julia vinograd (1943-2018) was a 'street poet' in berkeley, california. she devoted her life to writing poetry and sold her books by hand. she wrote 68 of them. her publisher has reported that she sold 150,000 books. she was issued a lifetime achievement award by the city of berkeley on june 5, 2004 and was named its unofficial poet laureate.

this issue is dedicated to her.

FUGUE ONE: NATURE

by C.F. Roberts

The summer sun's waning in early evening and I'm on the porch watching it all die for another revolution. I see shadow scamper toward me and it's B. coming in for another pass. She's wearing very little this time around----next to nothing, in fact. Topless---nothing on except-----whatever it is. Panties or a bikini bottom---it looks very wet and shiny, almost as if it were made from stretchy green balloon rubber.

She smiles, laughs and takes a swipe at me with her hand, obviously wanting me to give chase and I oblige her. Hell, even out here where we are it seems as though getting her away from the main road would be a prudent move. So I'm on her, and she giggles loudly as I try to corral her toward the back of the house. It's a wooded area, the closest neighbors are a block away, and it's just better for everybody.

It's not long before I've got my arms around her waist and I've hoisted her frame up off the ground, lout triumphant, the big, bad wolf claiming his prize. There's a danger in stopping to revel in every small victory, though----she makes a deft twist and I lose her. She moves further into the woods but I'm committed to the chase, now, having gotten a small hold of her, and the feel of her flesh filling my hands, the taste of her sweat on my tongue are the only motivators I need.

Once again, as we clear the back of the house I'm right on her and I'm captivated once again by this bottom she's wearing. Rubbery, shiny and tight to the skin, what is it? I grab onto what passes for a waistband and pull it back----it has great elasticity----then my foot is caught on a tree root and I stumble. The bottom snaps back on her with an audible "WHAP!" And she yelps in surprise. She's now gained ground. I'm trying to find my footing and she's pulling ahead of me by five, six, seven feet.

She hits a clearing ahead of me and I see her fall forward. I get past the thicket in time to see the earth swallow B. whole. With an audible "scrunch" I see bare back, flailing arms and then finally her golden bell of hair pulled beneath the ground and vanish.

I fall to my knees in the dirt where she fell....I was not planning for this.

It's as if she was never there at all. The dirt is solid, the bed of dead pine needles is still. The only sign that B. was ever there to begin with is a tiny patch of liquified balloon rubber---residue from whatever she was wearing.

I'm feeling clueless in this situation and I know the sun won't be up much longer. I thrust my fingers into the earth and start digging.

a smaller moment of her creating symbols

a smaller moment
of her
creating symbols

her ghost fan
coughing
on a winter
fly, her son

a bee sting
on the mind
of any angel
losing
its sense
of smell, our hair

separated
at birth
by sleep
a nostalgia
to which god

adds nothing

sun

poolside
one hears
a brother
tell a sister
it's like tickling
a scarecrow
when do you
love god
I love god
while I'm eating
I have a mom
does everything
quickly
a father
who rubs his head
who thinks
every kid
on a bike
is a unicorn
the cigarettes
are gone
if I see
a spider
I see
it has the memory
of an angel

motherlings

i.

the father
does he have
his notes
on how to leave (an infant

speechless

ii.

the sister she is in
my ear (is her darkness

the size
of a quarter

iii.

I mean to run a bath
but don't

iv.

(doom has a brother

shops
for a coffin

so nostalgic and bored, now, the angel of distance...

when sad, I put our mother
in a photo
taken
by a prophet, this

I know
is a failure
of grief

stairs

i.

god comes to me in the knowing I'll not find the one I'm here to replace

ii.

it is hard to carry
a nine-year old
not only
up and down
but also
by design

iii.

I had
what Peter had

three places
to smoke

poems
on this page
by
barton smock

distractions

god goes to sleep every morning knowing adam and eve were the same person. god is waiting to die. we bite the child, or we don't. our grief a prop of the churchgoer's improv. our emptiness made of wax.

veil of grey

incisors show,
though the moon
is too bright,
and no window
has been left open.
i sit alone and
hone the blade
from behind
a clean slate of grey cloud,
sharpen wit
upon the bone of midnight,
to soak its glow
in the blood of my hungry claws.

red ochre dancers

mammoth ferns soften
the narrow passageways.
here, there are no angels,
canyoneering slots
of claustrophobic cave.
abseil, upon abseil,
eyes bathe in waterfall sprays.
drenched in a rush of deliberate obscenities,
we see not the bright serpents
slithering down sloppy moss.

descending further below,
the coolness of an emerald pool
reflects cathedral-like rays
upon a sacred, sandstone canvas,
holding tight the root of all our aboriginal art.

poetry
by

eliana Vanessa

nightsend

winter, pallor you bring, accordingly,
for, without the pleasure of night condoning
these happenings--the balancing act of red-flare,
blooming in still meadows, their disaster gesturing,
the chill of amorous wind stinging, wringing drier,
thirstier, the lips—why, no one would know--
how you pry open the melody-mouth my hips
nor how you trespass all uncertainty,
again and again, rising above internal, immortal decay,
fracture of a liquid shine in grey,
gorgeous breath, silhouetting ruins of death,
because in turmoil, you are present too, ever fertile,
in seedlings of silent breeze, statuesque, rendering grace,
tonight, pensively unfold me into dire straits, alongside the longing,
for this, I honor you wholly,
lovely harlequin hearts, disappearing in the sand and all

in season

lover, how could, we, coyly
disappear into shadows,
simply rest among denuded cypresses?
shyness, discretion,
never our strongest traits.
the mouth of a wild river waits.
tonight, carve a trellis of stars
to open the gate,
as blinding doubts yield to moonlit fate,
for in dreams,
our eyes, the palette knives,
have too often caressed the same natural wonders,
the thrill of leaves, racing to meet the breeze,
boughs rustling in synchronized rhapsodies,
all the while, seasons ripening their fruit for the taking.

Not Banking On A Last Hurrah

My dreams are
filled with holes
and unidentified
flying objects.
My thoughts are
skittish as moths
in a light show,
flirting with graceful
death by free fall
but with a smidgen
of intent thrown in.
My hopes stagger,
bludgeoned,
by a boisterous fool
in a mirrored room
where blood collects
in prised corners.
My debts to the living
are nearly paid.
I'm almost up to date
but badly dated.
I live inside my head
in an age before disco
when a hand held out
was for pulling up
not pushing down.
I don't know how
to navigate
this newest now.
Yet here I am.
I'm hoarding
my last breath –
the only collateral
I can trust.

Barbara Moore

All I Can Say

In letters
regarding my
love life,
all I can say
is, "There's a man
that will never
love me, like I,
him."

Stephanie Hiteshew

Night Shift

There's something
about being
naturally natural
in your own environment
that is extremely
profound,

like walking
on the moon
or bringing a baby
into this world,
and the suddenness
of truth,

bridges you can
walk on
that are still there
when you return,
like the waitress
who works
the night shifts
who knows
more about you.
then your woman
back home.

Stephanie Hiteshew

solar eclipse

he was
a double death threat,
hand on the back of my neck,
where delirium and sweat
met to weigh
the cost of everything,
a modicum of daisies,
forming would-be crowns.
we lit up the hazy planets below,
as death blew bubbles
over the graves,
made sweeter the place,
where love's sky
twice touched eclipse glow,
a black diamond ring,
encased within the outline
of a brilliant sun.

eliana vanessa

angels and heels

fingers trace
circles of dust,
gathering on top
of old shoe boxes,
housing the barely-worn
heels that would sprain
the ankles of an angel
slipping in the rain,
though she'd be
the one who'd
make it on time
too late,
sacrificing
the rivulets of blood
her passions might wake,
for a closet full of blistering mistakes.

eliana vanessa

MY OWN PRIVATE JONESTOWN

Dealing aces and eights up
from the bottom of the Thoth deck
free associating
the appropriate last gasp
fires dying along blighted landscapes
I can't take my mouth off the
long, flat stretch of days that lay out in
front of me like a desert or
a skillet
what do you say we call it a draw
say you felt sorry for me first and we
watched it follow the traditional arc of
snakes
ladders
hell dolls
ethical bankruptcy
and marinated chicken?
For my own purposes I draw
this line in the sand, cross
myself reflexively, curse and spit
on the curb
I want to visit cruel tableaux on a
cowardly populace who expect only
the lowest palatable denominator
I want to engage in photo shoots featuring
sexy women wearing gas masks
pose with the world's prettiest firearm
that will never emit a bullet but
remain pure and virginal
I want to hunker down with you in a
darkened room for several days
tripping balls and watching interesting films,
inane cartoons, xenophobic
religious programming
I want a chinese buffet
socialist ponies that go on for miles
I want you to sit on my face
I wanna die in Paris

ADS BETWEEN RERUNS

mauled children
mauled animals
dating apps
addiction hotlines
insurance
mortgage scams
phone sex lines
weight loss miracles

WALL SOCKET 666

I keep having this dream
a fantasy, really
all manner of fuckery is going down
you can slip "fuckery" under any cover you please
it's true to life, fuckery is eternal
anyway, regardless of said fuckery there's
always this big, rubber insulated plug in
a wall socket and I'm always driven
to approach it and in
every instance people break from what they're
doing to yell at me, to snap out of whatever bogus,
abusive bullshit they're engaged in and order, then
beg me not to yank that plug out of the socket
knowing full well what's next I always
pull the plug and it stops
EVERYTHING. STOPS.
EVERYTHING. ENDS.
EVERYTHING.
ENDS.
I think about this frequently.
And you need to know that about me.

poetry
by
c.f. roberts

The Blessing Of Wild Things

by

Will Mayo

Then once many years ago I was sitting in the backyard of my parents' house reading away in one of my many books in a comfortable lawn chair with a canopy of trees surrounding me giving me the best shade from a searing sun when, suddenly, a dove descended from its nest in the crook of the branch above me and landed on my head. I gave just a little shudder, turned another page and kept reading. The dove stayed with me there for just a few paragraphs before it gave a little flutter of its wings and lifted back to its nest above. I felt blessed somehow then by that descending and lifting bird. The sun shined just right with its ray from the heavens above. The birdsong made a nice background melody to the story I was reading. After a while, I left my chair, walked inside my parents' house with book in hand and let the years pass silently by. I forgot that book I had read (rare for me there to forget a book) but I never forgot that dove, its wings rustling as I turned the pages here and there. Once again, I was more comfortable with wild things than with the all too tame people of the country I called home. I suppose you might say it came naturally to me that way.

FUGUE TWO: BEREAVEMENT

by C.F. Roberts

The neighborhood kids loiter around the front of our apartment, eyeing the planters around our front window with questionable intent on their faces. Not to paint them in a bad light, it's just that they're kids and they're curious, they're impetuous and they sometimes they do shit for no good reason. I was uncomfortable around children as a child----now as an adult I'm still uncomfortable around them.

One stares up at me and grins puckishly, nudging the smallest flower pot with his foot.

It's the newest; it sits barren with fresh soil, its sole surface decoration a small faux marble rock being ridden by a cherub. It's still cold and the planters all bear artificial ornaments; fake flowers, pinwheels, metal dragonfly figurines.

"Please don't touch our planters," I tell them. "Those are for our babies, and we miss them very much." The one boy's smile drops slightly.

"This one," I say, pointing to the fresh pot, "is new. We just lost our baby last week. This is for our baby. We miss him, and my wife is very sad. Don't touch the flower pots, because our babies meant a lot to us and I don't want my wife to cry."

One of the girls, one of the ones I worried least about anyway, chimes in, and her eyes are filling. "How come your baby died?"

"He was very young," I answer truthfully. "We tried to take care of him but he wasn't strong enough."

Several of the kids have a grave look about them, as if something were going on they'd never considered. One slow boy with a bad haircut asks, "Is your wife gonna be okay?"

"Shut up," whispers one girl under her breath. "They lost their babies!"

"How come all your babies died?" Asks the youngest.

"Shut up!" The girl rasps again.

"I'm trying to make her feel better," I tell them. "It's not easy, though. If you see anyone doing anything bad near here, please make them stop. We need your help."

Several of the children nod slowly.

I don't tell them that the "babies" buried in the planters are really pet rats. They genuinely are our babies and we miss them.

One day we will go wherever it is we're meant to stay. We will carry these planters with us cross

country, bound tightly and securely under a cover holding the soil in place sure as if we were carrying Dracula's coffin dirt to some faraway destination. We will bury these pots in the earth for good and all, giving our babies a final resting place where no one will ever disrupt their sleep.

Stink

"you stink," she said
"don't come any closer"
she was right, I did
although I had showered
in the morning
used deodorant
put on clean clothes
a fresh shirt
I hadn't been working
in the brewery, the factory
or sweeping the streets
I hadn't created or destroyed
anything
only sat in the house
drinking a beer

I knew what it was
the stink of failure
and it hurt
especially as I had
been under the impression
that I was the only one
who could smell
it

a

d

r

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n

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y

by

Thoughts on Luck

luck is a dog
that decides when to bite
it chews on a bone
whilst making up its mind

luck is a beer bottle
empty, full or somewhere
in between but always
running towards zero

you make your own luck
they say
but it's so easy to
destroy it
without even
trying

The Lies of Our Lives

we wear the lies
of our lives
emblazoned on our
t-shirts

he's never been near Hollywood
she couldn't name a song
by the Ramones
the kid is not a speed king
and this one is not a
porn star in training

we wear the lies
of our lives
emblazoned on our
t-shirts

trying be something
we are not

simply decoration
trying to fit in
somewhere
somehow

m

a

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n

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n

g

My ancient life

as I wandered a buffalo brought me
to the hill of the hermit
and the hermit, he told me how to build
So I built a house there and brought the kings
but the kings wouldnt listen, wouldnt listen
they traveled away
to the land where the sweetwater thrives
and the rains come and come, but dont destroy the castles
dont destroy the castles
which had been built on a foundation of good bricks
good bricks
an organized pile of stone
a pile of loose stone which baked in the sun
baked in the sun all day
which kept them in the night
nice and warm nice and warm
and the women sold their beautiful blankets

sold the blankets
which wrapped their beautiful golden wares
to give to the king
to honor the king
who was pleased, and gave of his land
gave of his land
and gave them each a buffalo
for by then he had so many buffalo
who were gentle and had often
explained to him what to do
to the point at which he became known as King Buffalo
a great and total kingdom of the wells
for he had also learnt how to dig the well
and everywhere sweetwater flowed

HAIBUN 7

As usual, 4 in the morning and I still can't sleep

She lowered herself down but did not grasp the chair. Nor feel it with the back of her legs. But she was tired and plopped her ass down, the chair pushed back from under her, and she landed on the floor. She yelled, and lay on her side. She could not rise.

As usual, when you think

your life couldn't be better

everything falls apart

by Gail Wolper

FUGUE THREE: CHILDHOOD

by C.F. Roberts

Dying order of spring the bacchanal is pregnant and I'm thinking, strawberry.

Nostalgic teenage splash in waning sun and things go wrong but never mind that now.
Everyone's laughing and having a good time and ultimately bodies start migrating toward the patio.
Splash in the sun strawberry. It's all incidental it's all biological. In the end we remember the good
times fireworks sweaty weather school's out go crazy we're all having a good time after all.

Strawberry big lion hair thrown splash and the troglodyte summer fire everyone's laughing and
having a good time....clashing battle of the sexes boys versus the girls grease dirt travelogue starving
skirmish blowback hopping in water strawberry nazi playfight half a battle tomfoolery burgeoning into
passage with troglodyte third wave splashing seconds away from murder

final in a splash strawberry roughneck rough hands crossing barriers to little breasts summer dying
order the bacchanal necessitates

SACRIFICE

what gets placed on the altar what are you prepared to let go of?

Care? Caution? Virginity? Dignity? Self? Security? Sanity?

Nostalgic teen splash in waning sun troglodyte roughneck rough hands drowning backflips stuck
in the grip ignorant monkey chatters and laughs along because everybody's having a good time
laughing hands that grasp and maul hands on breasts strawberry we were laughing you were laughing
at least it seemed that way water nazi playfight roughneck hands crossing barriers to little breasts
laughing grabbing overwhelming drowning

goodbye strawberry

I'm sorry strawberry

everyone was laughing and having a good time

dying order of spring dying dying

I didn't understand what I was seeing

I know I'll never see you again

goodbye

strawberry

Book Review Ws

Ghost Arson by Barton Smock
Kung Fu Treachery Press

It's no easy task for me to review Smock's work other than to say I've enjoyed it and wish everyone could experience it for themselves.

Smock has coded his relationship between his internal and external worlds in a language I'm certain will evoke strong personal reactions from the individual reader.

The poems are concise, brimming with familiar images that become tender or frightening, often reversing in unexpected ways as he searches the depths of the human condition.

In short, it's fascinating stuff!

I highly recommend this book and would urge everyone to discover this uniquely powerful, visionary voice.

Abstract Arguments For The Casual Destruction
of Everything

John Sweet
Severed Tongue Press

John and I go way back to the beginning of my zine/small press days. His anger has never softened. His work has never lost its vital edge.

Sweet will not accept lies and he targets the hypocrisy that hides behind the facades of religion and politics. He is an unwavering protester and his poems ache, bleed and often SCREAM at the injustices, the crimes committed by those who proclaim to be protecting us. His work is more important now than ever. In a letter included with submissions he sent me sometime back in the 90's, he wrote one simple line: "keep fighting the forces of fuckery."

It is wonderful to know Sweet has spent his life doing exactly that.

Edmonton And Other Poems

Mel C. Thompson

Mel C. Thompson Publishing

Mel is yet another old friend who shows up in sporadic bursts of brilliance. His poetry is crafted in humor, love for the world and love for the WORD. This book consists of three to five-line poems written on a flight over Edmonton. The poet incorporates images, sudden and phenomenal, of the metropolitan area into abstract vignettes that are entertaining and informative. This is a sublime, accomplished work from a master poet.

reviews by Kevin M. Hilschman

Far East

"Look at those clouds!"

I say.

"Look at those pillows!"

You say.

Our backs drowned in the muddy water,
songs a paddy field hums drone in our ears.

"Look at the plane!"

I say.

"Will it bomb us?"

You ask.

Which year is it in the world?
How long did we drift in and out here?

"Look at the rat!"

I say.

"Its belly seems bloated with time!"

You say.

Twins of The Heartland

Twins appear on the roof again.
Your right sleeve converses
with your left sleeve,
now settled over your heart.

You can choose anything and nothing.

My shirt rose with the wind,
and the string taut between two posts
waits for a tightrope walk.

Circus never comes in this neighborhood.

Twin does.

It means you have two hearts today.
Only blindness can negotiate between them.

poetry by
kushal poddar

The Thorns And Gardens Of The Cloud World

The thorns in the clouds
grow faster and thicker this year,
towards the end of the hope
for a monsoon this year,
at the dawn of your discovery
of purifying blood
by pressing your teeth against my lips
for two continuous breathlessness sessions.

In the gloaming
the roses bloom on the clouds.
I sigh, know- I must dare the thorns
and pick up some of those blood buds,
array them in a vase
shaped like a planetarium.

What It Means To Be Dead And Alive

The flakes of old picture
swirl. This pillar holds
a city's hand. That pillar
keeps it leaning
near the water still flowing,
a little yellower.

Summer's thighs popped
over the window sill
touch the pet dog's tongue.
The cold of sudden sadness
makes her smile. Again.

The flakes of smoke seek
a fire. This pier holds a burning.
Pigeon's clapping deafens the sky.

Tijuana Couple

A couple in Tijuana
snowballs depression.

Their daughter just flies over
the furthest tower,
over the border.

The thing about the pigeons is
they have old man hidden
in their voice and they look like babies.

A snowball in Tijuana
exchanges two kinds of mindlessness.

Games People Play

by

Will Mayo

By 1973 or thereabouts, we kids who were starting to become teenagers were beginning to pay attention to the news.

"Hey, Willie," one of them said to me, "this Vietnam War thing has been going on for several years already. Do you think your number will ever come up?"

"Nah," I said. "I'd be a Section Eight case all the way. Totally nuts, you know?"

But it couldn't help but make me wonder about all the war games the world was playing just the same. By the time Carter got to be president and we were all required to register for the draft I was sorely tempted to burn my application in protest but I sent it off anyway knowing full well that they didn't want me and I didn't want them. Still as all the years passed by and I watched all the cripples come home from my country's many wars worse off than they left I couldn't help but utter a prayer and a curse to myself. It seemed a fool's game to me then and it seems a fool's game to me now.

shine

all gods are the same in the
room of murdered children and
all are useless

faceless

imaginary friends that cast
no shadows, but the stench here is
overwhelming and democracy
has failed

the blame is mine and the
blame is yours and what happens
to us when the ideas of
hope and honor can
no longer be sustained?

how exactly did we end up at
the mercy of butchers
and wolves?

who am i if not your enemy?

opens the door, shoots
the first cop in the face and
then the other and then
deeper into the woods

a house on fire

a young girl's body found in
a muddy ditch
up on burnt hill road

we have been running for
better than 20 years now and
we are nothing if not lost

the war refuses to end,
refuses to be won, and the
soldiers all use pregnant
women as shields

the priest forces the
boy to his knees

says everything worth
doing is worth
doing in the name of god

makes it sound like
the holiest of lies

lover

blurred outlines january late
afternoon grey houses in early evening
light, this woman who will set her child on fire,
these young men who will rape a teenage girl then
leave her in a vacant lot, this moment that will
arrive already ruined beyond repair and then
the one after that and then the
one after that

and the war, of course,
and without an end in sight

the mindless need for victory

the makers of bombs and of poison gases
balanced out by the
need for money to survive

the future still only a theory but
the possibilities narrowing

this woman at the edge of the road with
a can of lighter fluid and
her ever-present gift of despair

or the passing days like burning flags

keep digging those
holes for the dead, keep
digging those holes
for the dying

for the unborn and
for their mothers

for the weak

for the mighty

dig one for yourself and
stop being such a
goddamn baby

weren't you the fool
who wanted this war?

john sweet

poetry by

hit the keys

one
day
the
maggots
will
hang
hammocks
in
my
skull
&
nap
w/ fat
bellyfuls
of
unwritten
poems

the poetry reading

it was all
too much
a pissing
contest
for any of
the poets
to draw even
a pinprick
of blood

how dare the sun?

once my mother
told me a story
about when her father
suddenly died
of a heart attack
on a brooklyn street
in 1963

& she had to go
to do laundry
the day after
& looking around
the crowded place
asked herself
how dare these
washers turn
& these dryers spin?
& how can the sun
still be shining?
& decades later
i remembered it again
alone there
in the hospital room
w/ her body
as the baseball game

announcer shouted
the play-by-play
on the television
& afternoon june light
blasted thru
the leafy boughs
just outside the window
past the undrawn curtains

untitled

i offered a flower
to one of my monsters
& a smile opened up
around its fangs
& it wept holding
the blue violet
in its claws

poetry
by

rob plath

bursting

there
is
an
invalid
slowly
waking
up
in
you

&
behind
that,
a cadaver

&
behind
that,
a
star...

i move about
this planet
like a dead man
a chalk outline
around my shape
this vertical corpse
daydreaming
of its old home
up in the heavens
in a wilderness
of stars



